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Twenty-seventh report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 1610 (2005) of 30 June 2005, the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) for a final period of six months, until 31 December 2005. The present report provides an assessment of the situation in Sierra Leone as UNAMSIL departs, and an update on preparations for the establishment of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), as requested by the Security Council in its resolution 1620 (2005) of 31 August 2005.

II. Political developments

2. The political situation in Sierra Leone has remained calm and stable since my report of 20 September 2005 (S/2005/596). However, there are still a number of factors which pose potential threats to the security and political stability the country currently enjoys. These include the widespread destitution and disaffection, especially among the unemployed youth; corruption, which is still prevalent in the public sector; weaknesses in the judicial system; and resource constraints and other capacity shortfalls inhibiting the Government's ability to deliver services to the population.

3. Public expectations of possible peace dividends remain high, but there is a general perception of low Government responsiveness to the needs of the population. At the same time, the Government is still facing considerable challenges in putting together an effective strategy for communicating its vision and programmes to the public and in creating an environment conducive to effective participation of and closer collaboration with civil society and the private sector in enhancing democratic governance.

4. There have been signs of possible tensions as political parties begin to prepare for the national elections to be held in 2007. The two largest parties in the country, the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party and the All People's Congress, are both experiencing intra-party divisions, which have resulted in the emergence of splinter groups. A faction of the All People's Congress is challenging the party's elected leadership in the courts, while a prominent member of the Sierra Leone People's Party, Charles Margai, formed his own political party, known as the People's

Movement for Democratic Change, after his bid to be selected as the party's presidential candidate for the 2007 elections failed.

5. The Sierra Leone People's Party and the All People's Congress held their respective national conventions in September, to select their leaders and presidential candidates for the 2007 elections. The two parties selected the Vice-President, Solomon Berewa, and Ernest Bai Koroma, respectively, as their leaders and presidential candidates. The former Minister of Internal Affairs, Hinga Norman, who is in the custody of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, declared his candidacy for the leadership of the ruling party, but has since withdrawn. It appears that Mr. Norman still commands considerable influence among the former members of the Civil Defence Forces, which he led during the civil war.

6. UNAMSIL continued supporting the efforts to address the challenges identified above. The Mission is engaged in promoting inter-party dialogue as well as reconciliation and tolerance among the political parties. It has also encouraged the parties to pursue bi-partisan approaches to national issues in the legislature.

7. UNAMSIL is also helping the Government of Sierra Leone to resolve issues that have created tensions in communities, such as disputes over chiefdom boundaries. In a collaborative effort, the Mission, the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development and local government authorities and civil society groups have launched an ongoing mediation initiative aimed at settling outstanding disputes at the provincial and district levels.

8. Efforts to strengthen the Anti-Corruption Commission have included the addition of international personnel to the Commission. So far, the Commission has investigated corruption charges against six Cabinet Ministers. In November, the President, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, appointed a new Chairman of the Anti-Corruption Commission following difficulties in relations between the former Chairman and several public bodies, including the legislature, which had impeded the work of the Commission. It is hoped that the change of leadership will enhance the effectiveness of the Commission. The Commission is, however, also plagued by serious resource constraints.

9. With respect to access to justice, as indicated in section X below, UNAMSIL has assisted the efforts to ease the backlog in court trials, and has supported training and capacity-building for court personnel, as well as the rehabilitation of prisons. More efforts, however, are required to address the challenges in these areas.

10. Organizational preparations for the 2007 elections, including the restructuring of the National Electoral Commission and the delimitation of constituencies, are ongoing. On 1 December, Parliament approved the composition of the Political Parties Registration Commission, which was created under the Political Parties Act of 2002. Both Government and international support for the electoral process has been encouraging. The Government has committed over US$ 8 million to the process, while international partners have established a basket fund to mobilize the remaining $18.4 million required to complete key electoral tasks, including voter registration.

III. Security situation

11. The overall security situation in the country remained stable during the period under review. The national security agencies have continued to acquit themselves satisfactorily since UNAMSIL transferred security primacy to them last year. The Sierra Leone police, in particular, have gradually developed their ability to contain and deal effectively with internal threats to security by performing their tasks without direct assistance from UNAMSIL troops. The short-term indicators regarding internal security are positive, with little probability of a return to civil conflict, while criminal activities are expected to remain at a manageable level.

12. There were three serious security incidents, which tested the capacity of Sierra Leone's security sector, during the period under review. On 7 November, the murder of two motorcycle transportation operators resulted in violent riots in Kenema. The motorcycle transportation operators are predominantly former combatants. The Sierra Leone police imposed a curfew until the following day and were able to bring the situation under control without assistance from UNAMSIL. Similar riots occurred in Koidu when another motorcycle transportation operator was killed in a traffic accident on 18 November. As in the Kenema case, the Sierra Leone police were able to effectively restore law and order in the town.

13. On 19 November, supporters of Charles Margai, the leader of the People's Movement for Democratic Change, disrupted a ceremony organized to commemorate the fifty-second anniversary of a college in Bo, where Vice-President Solomon Berewa was the guest of honour. The police were again able to bring the situation under control without the intervention of UNAMSIL.

14. The establishment of provincial and district security committees has created a framework for coordination between the Sierra Leone Office of National Security, the Sierra Leone police, the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces and local authorities on security matters at the district level. The handling of the riots in Kenema referred to above, where the police and local security apparatus successfully activated all the existing mechanisms to bring the situation under control, illustrated the effectiveness of these security arrangements.

15. Nonetheless, the country's security structure, including the Office of National Security and the provincial and district security committees, still requires further assistance in capacity-building. International support will be critical in implementing the recommendations of the national security review commissioned by President Kabbah last year. The review took a comprehensive approach, covering not only the efforts to reform the police and the armed forces and the need to improve coordination among security agents but also the role of good governance and sound economic management in consolidating security and stability in Sierra Leone.

16. There were no major external threats to Sierra Leone's security during the reporting period. The situation in neighbouring Liberia continued to stabilize. The successful national elections and further consolidation of peace in that country are expected to have a salutary effect on stability in Sierra Leone. Nonetheless, the security situation in the border areas can be expected to remain fragile. The Sierra Leone armed forces and police continue to conduct joint border patrols, helping to foster better tactical coordination between the two security agencies. The border units are not well equipped or resourced, however. UNAMSIL and the United

Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) will continue to jointly monitor the border areas until the departure of UNAMSIL.

17. Further steps were taken towards a peaceful settlement of the Yenga border dispute between Guinea and Sierra Leone. Early in October, senior officials from the two countries, assisted by technical experts from the United Kingdom and France, conducted an on-site inspection of the disputed area and held consultations at Koindu. The two sides noted that an early settlement of the dispute was vital for promoting peace and stability in the Mano River basin. Follow-up bilateral consultations are expected to be held as soon as the experts submit their report.

IV. Inter-mission cooperation

18. The Heads of Mission of UNAMSIL, UNMIL and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) continued to share information and coordinate their peace efforts through regular meetings. The last meeting, organized by the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), was held in Monrovia on 27 October. With respect to Sierra Leone, the meeting noted the progress made in the drawdown of UNAMSIL.

19. As part of overall regional cooperation among United Nations agencies, the second meeting of United Nations country teams in the Mano River basin and Côte d'Ivoire was held in Conakry on 10 and 11 November to review progress in the implementation of the action plan adopted at the first regional meeting of the United Nations country teams in the Mano River basin, held on 15 and 16 February in Freetown. The Conakry meeting agreed to further enhance coordination within the United Nations system in various areas, including youth employment initiatives, HIV/AIDS prevention and cross-border issues.

V. Implementation of the drawdown plan

20. The withdrawal of UNAMSIL is proceeding on schedule and will be completed by the end of December. As at 1 December, the strength of the force stood at some 1,160 military personnel following the repatriation of the Ghanaian battalion at the end of September, the Pakistani battalion in October, and part of the Nigerian battalion in November. The remaining troops and 69 military observers are located in the Freetown area. The repatriation of the Nigerian battalion will be completed by 6 December, with the exception of the company protecting the Special Court as indicated in section VI below.

21. The strength of UNAMSIL police stood at 46 personnel as at 1 December. During the reporting period, the police personnel have been operating from the Central Division in Freetown, as well as from Kenema, Bo, Makeni and Lungi. Those team sites will remain operational until 31 December 2005, when all the police personnel will be repatriated, with the exception of a small team of 10 officers, who will be temporarily retained in Freetown to facilitate a seamless transition to UNIOSIL.

22. The drawdown of all categories of UNAMSIL civilian personnel is also on schedule. Some 87 administrative support staff will be retained to carry out the liquidation of UNAMSIL between 1 January and 30 June 2006. There will be a further reduction of the liquidation personnel in April 2006.

VI. Security for the Special Court for Sierra Leone

23. On 1 December, UNMIL assumed command of the company-sized Nigerian military unit that is currently providing security protection at the premises of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. UNMIL exercises operational command of this unit through a tactical headquarters located in Freetown. The Nigerian unit will be repatriated by 15 January 2006, when a military guard force from Mongolia will be fully deployed to relieve it. UNMIL will earmark a rapid reaction force that would be deployed from Monrovia to Freetown in the event of a situation where the Special Court guard force requires additional military assistance.

VII. Establishment of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone

24. Administrative preparations for setting up the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone, which will become operational on 1 January 2006, are in the final stages. The budget and staffing proposals as well as logistical and security arrangements are being finalized. I have already informed the Security Council of my intention to appoint Victor da Silva Angelo, the current Deputy Special Representative at UNAMSIL, as my Executive Representative for UNIOSIL. In addition, he will retain his current functions as the United Nations Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative. Eligible personnel from the Mission will be recruited to serve in UNIOSIL.

25. An interdepartmental team from the United Nations Secretariat and United Nations agencies, led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), visited Sierra Leone from 6 to 17 November to work with the Government and all relevant partners to draw up a draft peace consolidation strategy, which will provide the framework for the implementation of the mandate of UNIOSIL. UNIOSIL will finalize the draft strategy once it becomes operational.

26. The strategy will build upon the work accomplished under the transition plan for 2005, developed jointly by UNAMSIL and the United Nations country team, and will focus on peace consolidation through enhancing economic governance and creating lasting national capacities for conflict prevention. It will also complement the Government's poverty reduction strategy and the revised United Nations development assistance framework.

VIII. Implementation of the transition plan for 2005

27. Considerable progress was made towards completing the tasks set out in the joint UNAMSIL/United Nations country team transition plan for 2005. The third review of the Transition Plan, conducted in October, indicated encouraging results pointing to the successful completion of initiatives that the United Nations system in

Sierra Leone set for itself in order to ensure sustained peace and security, consolidate State authority and promote good governance and human rights, address cross-border issues, advance national recovery, thus laying the foundation for further post-conflict peacebuilding work.

A. Strengthening the capacity of the security sector

28. The efforts to strengthen the capacity of the Sierra Leone armed forces continued to receive encouraging support from Sierra Leone's international partners, including a recent donation of trucks by Switzerland and the planned procurement of communications equipment by the United Kingdom. India has offered to provide additional communication equipment for the armed forces, while the Netherlands has pledged to contribute more vehicles. Three patrol boats are expected from the United States and one from China. These crucial assets will greatly enhance the capability of the maritime wing of the armed forces. At the end of November, UNAMSIL handed over to the Government a barracks complex fully fitted as a joint national operations centre.

29. Nonetheless, the Government continues to face challenges in meeting the cost of operations of the armed forces, particularly payments for fuel and for the maintenance of the armed forces and police transport fleets. Sustained efforts are also needed to improve the living conditions of the armed forces personnel. During the period under review, UNMIL and UNDP continued to assist in the implementation of sanitation projects in military barracks in Freetown.

30. The ongoing restructuring of the armed forces to reduce their troop strength from the present level of some 13,000 military personnel to 10,500 by 2007 has slowed considerably, owing to the shortage of resources to cater for the retrenchments. The training and restructuring programme continues to rely heavily on international support and will need additional resources if it is to be completed on schedule. The United Kingdom-led International Military Advisory and Training Team has indicated its commitment to provide continued training to the Sierra Leone Armed Forces until at least 2010.

31. The current strength of the Sierra Leone police stands at some 9,500 personnel. To date, UNAMSIL police have provided training to some 4,000 police personnel, covering such areas as basic police training, training of trainers, computer literacy, human rights, airport security, driving, election monitoring, family support, criminal intelligence, policing diamond mining and cross-border activities, as well as middle and senior management training courses. They have also provided field-level mentoring on routine policing matters, such as suspect handling, report writing, investigations and patrols, as well as supervision aimed at making the police service more people-friendly and its policing activities more community-oriented.

32. The Sierra Leone police are currently deployed throughout Sierra Leone: 74 police stations and 112 police posts have been established across the country. In the assessment of UNAMSIL, the Sierra Leone police force is likely to be able to train the remaining police personnel to bring its strength to the authorized target of 9,500 by 2006. The deployment of police personnel in the provinces is still hampered by a lack of accommodation, however.

33. The Sierra Leone police are expected to train their full strength by 2006, and are able to deal effectively with localized internal threats. They are likely to be seriously challenged, however, particularly in the districts, in the event of a countrywide crisis, because of their deficiencies in communications and transport. Another challenge still confronting the Government is the sustenance of the police force, especially in terms of salaries and maintenance of equipment. Moreover, corruption is reportedly still prevalent in some police units, despite the ongoing efforts to tackle it.

34. Working relations between the armed forces and the police force continue to improve. Joint operations between the two forces regularly carried out in areas along the country's borders have indicated closer collaboration between the two security agencies. However, while many senior military officers acknowledge the primacy of the Sierra Leone police in maintaining law and order throughout the country, fundamental misconceptions about the role of the police still persist in some segments of the army and the society. On the whole, there are encouraging indications that, with sustained long-term support from international partners, the Sierra Leone security sector can gradually overcome remaining challenges.

B. Consolidation of State authority

35. Further strides have been made in decentralizing Government authority and services. The Government has handed over responsibility for major administrative services in education, health and agriculture to local councils, and carried out a review of tax rates at the local level. Overall, there has been significant progress in rebuilding local government infrastructure and institutions.

36. Notwithstanding these advances, the capacity of local councils to effectively deliver services to the local population is still hampered by lack of qualified personnel, as well as financial and logistical constraints, and the poor communications infrastructure. Further efforts are also needed to harmonize the distribution of responsibilities between local councils and the traditional chiefdom system.

C. Government control over the mining sector

37. The Government continued to implement measures to reassert its control over diamond mining through the issuance of more mining licences. As a result of progress made in this area, diamond exports increased from $10 million in 2000 to $130 million in 2004. By the end of September 2005, $109 million worth of diamonds had been exported. This remarkable growth is linked to increased Government control over diamond mining through the implementation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme and related measures taken by the Government.

38. However there is still need to enhance the monitoring of mines and diamond extraction and to reinforce security, particularly in areas where new discoveries are made. Although mining monitors have been deployed in the major diamond-mining areas nationwide, their work is limited by a lack of transport and other logistical constraints. More than 50 per cent of diamond-mining activities in the country are still unlicensed. In addition, diamond-mining rights and boundaries continue to be a

major source of disputes among chiefdoms. The large numbers of youths engaged in illegal mining activities, as well as the largely unregulated power of chiefdom authorities to issue mining licences, presented challenges in the Government's efforts to encourage potential investors. Bringing diamond mining under effective control will therefore be a long-term effort that requires active community involvement and international support long after the exit of UNAMSIL.

IX. Economic recovery

39. Projections for GDP growth in Sierra Leone for 2006 and 2007 are 7.1 per cent and 6.5 per cent, respectively. The principal sources of growth in the economy have been agriculture and mining, complemented by the service industry and to a smaller extent manufacturing.

40. An expected decline in foreign aid due to the phasing out of humanitarian and post-conflict recovery assistance, as well as perceived high levels of corruption, could result in a substantial reduction in foreign inflows. This would have a negative impact on the balance of payments, macroeconomic stability and the investment needed for growth. GDP growth of at least 6 per cent per annum needs be sustained for Sierra Leone to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty by 2015, though this largely depends on the availability of resources for investment from international aid flows and domestic savings.

41. The fiscal balance is improving, but it should be carefully managed over the next two years. Inflation is expected to be reduced to single digit figures in 2006 and 2007. Although the country's export base has improved, mainly because of the export of mineral resources, the level of imports remains elevated. In this respect, Sierra Leone has a high degree of external vulnerability. Advancing the development of informal and private sector activities will be crucial for job creation and income generation in the short term as the formal sector currently lacks sufficient capacity and the country's infrastructure remains weak.

42. Of particular concern for long-term stability is the 70 per cent poverty rate, high unemployment among youths, the poor quality of public service delivery, such as health and education, and the general perception that public institutions are failing to deliver services because of corruption. The national poverty gap, the average person's level of consumption below the poverty line, is 29 per cent, while the depth of poverty is concentrated in the rural areas. Related to these challenges are serious gender inequities, particularly in terms of economic empowerment of women, who have limited access to formal credit facilities owing to their lack of collateral. Women still have less access to land in rural areas because of discriminatory inheritance rights.

43. It is important that donors continue to support Sierra Leone through the country's poverty reduction strategy, which provides a framework for poverty reduction, economic growth and human development. A meeting of the Consultative Group for Sierra Leone was held on 29 and 30 November in London, where the Government presented its poverty reduction strategy paper to donors and other major stakeholders, including members of United Nations agencies. Also discussed at the meeting were such priority issues as youth unemployment, capacity-building, the need to fight corruption and HIV/AIDS prevention. Donors reconfirmed the

availability of $800 million for the implementation of the poverty reduction strategy during the period from 2005 to 2007.

X. Human rights

A. Monitoring and promotion of human rights

44. The increasing trend towards respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms continues, especially in the area of civil and political rights. As recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, efforts to repeal or amend the provisions of the Public Order Act to eliminate undue limits on freedom of expression are ongoing. Since my last report, there have been no reports of arbitrary killings, extrajudicial executions or a pervasive pattern of gross human rights violations, except with regard to female genital mutilation, which is still widespread.

45. In the area of social and economic rights, progress remains slow. The majority of the people of Sierra Leone continue to be marginalized with regard to basic economic and social rights, including lack of adequate education, health care and potable water caused by a number of factors, such as illiteracy, poverty, corruption and deficiencies in good governance.

46. Building a reformed and effective judiciary system continues to be a critical challenge. Although significant support has gone towards the construction and rehabilitation of court houses and prison facilities throughout the country, this has not been matched by the effective delivery of justice.

47. The problems resulting from overcrowded prisons are compounded by limited access to health-care facilities and legal counsel for prisoners as well as the erratic supply of water to prisons. While the United Nations has provided short-term solutions to alleviate the backlog in trial cases and water problems in the prisons, the Government also needs to put in place long-term measures to address these challenges.

48. Progress has been made towards the establishment of a national human rights commission. The Government has authorized the Ministry of Justice to proceed with the establishment of the commission and requested technical assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). UNAMSIL, supported by OHCHR, is collaborating with the Ministry in this regard to select and appoint commissioners in accordance with the Human Rights Commission Act. In response to a request from the Government, OHCHR has contracted a consultant, who arrived on 24 November, to facilitate consultations and provide advisory services for the establishment of the commission.

B. Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

49. As part of the OHCHR technical cooperation project to support the dissemination and implementation of the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, UNAMSIL has produced a shortened version of the report and conducted various workshops, including with the members of the Parliament, to create awareness on the findings and recommendations of the Commission.

UNAMSIL has also facilitated the countrywide distribution of the report, including child-friendly and compact disc versions.

50. In order to encourage civil society participation and local ownership of the national reconciliation process, the OHCHR project also provided grants to the Centre for Media Education and Technology and the Truth and Reconciliation Working Group to conduct various training and public awareness programmes and support local reconciliation initiatives.

51. Although the Government's White Paper accepted several recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in principle, the pace of implementation of the recommendations remains slow. More than a year since the report was submitted, the Government has yet to prepare a comprehensive plan of action for implementing the recommendations. However, civil society organizations recently presented a draft omnibus bill to Parliament on the repeal of some legislation, as recommended by the Commission. The Government has also decided that the Human Rights Commission, when established, should act as the follow-up committee to monitor the Government's compliance with and implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

52. A stakeholders' conference, proposed by OHCHR, is scheduled for December 2005 to review the human rights situation in Sierra Leone, and to assess the challenges, constraints and residual tasks to be undertaken in the post-UNAMSIL phase. The conference will also aim at contributing to the development of an effective and coordinated work plan for the human rights component of UNIOSIL during 2006.

XI. Gender issues

53. UNAMSIL continued to work with the Government and civil society to disseminate Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. During the period under review, workshops were held in Freetown and in the provinces for local administration and non-governmental organizations on the implementation of the resolution.

54. The capacity of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, which is charged with coordinating gender equality programmes within the Government, is still limited. Non-governmental organizations advocating for women's rights are largely concentrated in Freetown and they also lack resources. It is therefore for Sierra Leone's development partners to continue to provide the support needed to build the capacity of the Ministry and women's organizations to enable them to effectively advocate and coordinate their activities for the promotion of women's rights.

XII. Discipline and personnel conduct issues

55. UNAMSIL continued to intensify its efforts to cultivate awareness of and train its civilian and military personnel on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and the United Nations code of conduct. The Mission also worked in collaboration with UNICEF to train the United Nations agencies' focal points on sexual exploitation and abuse. The Mission also actively participates in the Coordinating

Committee on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, which is a countrywide network that includes representatives from the United Nations system, the Government, non-governmental and civil society organizations.

56. UNAMSIL is issuing information circulars to help United Nations personnel understand what constitutes sexual exploitation and abuse. In addition, a list of off-limits facilities in Freetown and other major cities has been established, and strict monitoring arrangements are in place to ensure the compliance of personnel with this regulation. The existing mechanisms to prevent and investigate cases of sexual exploitation and abuse will continue under UNIOSIL.

XIII. Mission support issues

57. The administrative component of UNAMSIL continues to prepare logistical and administrative infrastructure to facilitate transition to UNIOSIL. By 1 January 2006, the necessary logistical arrangements are expected to be in place to support the implementation of the UNIOSIL mandate. A number of camps formerly used by UNMIL, which UNIOSIL will not need, are being handed over to the Government of Sierra Leone.

58. UNAMSIL has also completed a major expansion of the camp for the guard force providing security for the Special Court. The Mission is also shipping assets that will not be required by UNIOSIL to other peacekeeping operations.

XIV. Observations

59. As UNAMSIL departs from Sierra Leone, it leaves behind a country that has great potential to achieve lasting stability, democracy and prosperity. Over the six years of its operations in Sierra Leone, the Mission forged an effective partnership with the United Nations country team, countries of the subregion, the donor community, humanitarian organizations, Sierra Leone civil society and the Government, which has placed Sierra Leone on a firm path to post-conflict recovery. As a result of this collaborative effort, a stable security environment has been established throughout the country and substantial progress has been made in rebuilding the security sector. State authority has been restored throughout Sierra Leone and significant strides have been made towards re-establishing the Government's control over the country's diamond-mining sector.

60. The human rights situation is also improving, while the efforts to promote national cohesion, reconciliation and tolerance are making progress. In addition, Sierra Leone has achieved sustained economic recovery over the past three years. Sierra Leone has also started building peaceful and mutually beneficial relations with its neighbours. UNAMSIL has therefore successfully completed its peacekeeping mandate.

61. The completion of the peacekeeping phase of the United Nations engagement is another turning point for Sierra Leone. The tasks facing the country as it pursues the post-conflict peacebuilding agenda are as challenging as those it had to tackle during the peacekeeping and emergency relief phases. The socio-economic situation, in particular, presents formidable challenges and has the potential to undermine the political stability Sierra Leone currently enjoys. It is therefore

imperative for the country, supported by its development partners, to redouble the efforts to address the problem of pervasive corruption, and to continue to pursue policies that will ensure sustained economic growth, so as to create employment and reduce poverty.

62. The Government's capacity to deliver services to the population, particularly in the areas of education, health and sanitation, needs sustained attention. It is through progress in these critical areas that the population, which has been deprived by a brutal conflict, can begin to see and feel tangible peace dividends.

63. Sustained stability will also depend on the ability of the Government to successfully carry through the security sector reform programme to its completion. Continued efforts to reinforce the capacity of institutions that underpin good governance, in particular the judicial sector, will be equally important in this regard. These efforts require a level of resources that Sierra Leone is unable to provide on its own. Continued donor support for these critical reform programmes will therefore be essential.

64. Despite the challenges described above, the prospects for Sierra Leone are promising. In addition to the commendable efforts of the Government, the country also continues to enjoy the goodwill of its international partners, including the donor community. In this regard, I am greatly encouraged by the outcome of the Consultative Group meeting recently held in London, where donors pledged further support to Sierra Leone after the departure of UNAMSIL. The international community has also demonstrated its determination to secure the gains made since the deployment of UNAMSIL by establishing UNIOSIL, which has a strong mandate to support the Government's post-conflict peacebuilding efforts in order to ensure peace and security, consolidate State authority and promote good governance and human rights, address cross-border issues, and advance national recovery, economic and social development.

65. I am also encouraged by the enthusiasm shown by Sierra Leone's political parties as they start preparing for the elections to be held in 2007. Donors are pledging substantial support for the electoral process. I however appeal to the political parties to conduct their electoral activities in a manner that does not undermine the hard-won peace and stability they currently enjoy. The elections will constitute a major test not only of the country's ability to sustain democratic governance but also of the capacity of its security sector to sustain law and order, and a stable security environment in the delicate political environment which the elections will inevitably create.

66. Given the unique history of UNAMSIL, I cannot but feel a deep sense of satisfaction as I submit this last report on the Mission. The trials and tribulations faced by the Mission during the crisis of 2000, the measures taken to reverse its fortunes, and its achievements between 2001 and today, are indeed remarkable. The Mission's recovery from the 2000 ordeal offers a wealth of lessons for current and future peacekeeping operations. The Secretariat has already started extracting the best practices from those lessons.

67. UNAMSIL is also a Mission that has broken new ground in a number of significant areas. It was the first United Nations peacekeeping operation to "re-hat" a parallel sub-regional peacekeeping force. It was also the first to enter into an "over-the-horizon" backstopping arrangement with a Member State, in this case the

United Kingdom, which also simultaneously launched a security sector reform programme to complement the Mission's efforts. The integrated mission concept, with a triple-hatted Deputy Special Representative, who brought together the efforts and resources of the mission, the United Nations system and humanitarian organizations to work towards common goals at different stages of the peace process was also introduced for the first time in UNAMSIL.

68. The Mission's exit strategy, which was based on a carefully calibrated gradual drawdown of the Mission's military component and guided by specific benchmarks, was also an innovative approach by the Security Council. This approach gave Sierra Leone the requisite security space to consolidate peace over the past three years. The establishment of UNIOSIL too, with its integrated nature and a comprehensive peacebuilding mandate, is a groundbreaking initiative. The regional approach to peacekeeping operations was moreover tested for the first time through inter-mission cooperation between UNAMSIL and other United Nations presences in the subregion. UNAMSIL and its sister missions in the subregion took inter-mission cooperation to higher levels, beyond information-sharing, to mounting coordinated operations in border areas, sharing logistical assets and, recently, placing a military unit deployed in Sierra Leone under the command of the peacekeeping operation in Liberia.

69. I remain concerned, however, about the volatile security and political situation in Sierra Leone's immediate neighbourhood, which can be expected to continue to present serious security challenges for the country. Nonetheless, it is gratifying to note that the presence of both UNAMSIL and UNMIL has enabled the countries of the Mano River basin to begin rebuilding peaceful and mutually beneficial relations, which will help to enhance their individual security. While Sierra Leone is making commendable efforts to rebuild good-neighbourly relations, those efforts should be underpinned by the revitalization of the Mano River Union and the construction of new mechanisms for security cooperation among Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Liberia.

70. In the meantime, it is hoped that continued peacekeeping engagement in Liberia in the post-election period will remain a key stabilizing factor for both Sierra Leone and the wider Mano River basin. Concerted efforts to resolve the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire will also be important for Sierra Leone, as the presence of armed combatants in any country in the West Africa subregion does not bode well for the stability of all.

71. In conclusion, I would like to express gratitude to all past and present civilian and military personnel of UNAMSIL, as well as my Special Representative, Daudi Mwakawago, and all previous leaders of the Mission, who have made the successful completion of the UNAMSIL mandate possible. I also pay tribute to other members of the United Nations system in Sierra Leone, as well as the donor community and humanitarian organizations for their significant contribution to the establishment of the peace and stability that Sierra Leone currently enjoys. The Government and people of Sierra Leone also deserve commendation for their remarkable resilience and for making good use of the opportunity offered by international partners to lift their country from crisis.

Annex

United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone: contributions as at 1 December 2005

A. Military component

Country	*Number*
Bangladesh	232
Germany	08
Jordan	70
Nigeria	449
Pakistan	290
Military observers	69
Total	**1 198**

B. United Nations police

Country	*Number*
Gambia	02
Ghana	01
India	02
Jordan	02
Kenya	01
Malaysia	01
Namibia	02
Nepal	03
Nigeria	04
Pakistan	01
Sweden	02
Turkey	03
Zambia	04
Zimbabwe	02
Total	**30**

Map No. 4132 Rev. 33 UNITED NATIONS
December 2005 (Colour)

Department of Peacekeeping Operations
Cartographic Section